

TITLE: CELLULAR TELEPHONE, PERSONAL DIGITAL ASSISTANT WITH
VOICE COMMUNICATION UNIT

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part to U. S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/587,743 filed June 5, 2000 which is a continuation of U. S. Patent application Serial No. 09/309,107 filed May 10, 1999 and issued as U. S. Patent No. 6,094,492 on July 25, 2000.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field Of The Invention

The present invention relates to personal communication systems, including, but not limited to smart phones, PDAs with telecommunications accessories, and cellular or satellite telephones with personal digital assistant capabilities.

Problems In The Art

The present invention relates to hands free voice communications with a personal electronic device. Recently, many attempts have been made to combine the functionality of personal digital assistance (PDAs) with cellular telephones. Although the term cellular telephones is used throughout, it is to be understood that this term encompasses satellite telephones and other types of wireless voice communications such as is presently known or may become known. The present invention includes all of these variations in the type of wireless voice communications.

The use of wireless voice communications is still problematic in a number of respects, particularly in respect

to hands free communications. In voice communication systems, such as cellular phones, it is more convenient and safer for voice communications to occur without requiring the use of hands. Many attempts have been made at solving this problem, resulting in running of cords between headsets and cellular telephones, heavy and bulky headset units, and related problematic attempts at solutions.

A related problem is the quality of voice communications. As can be appreciated, users are prone to use cellular phones in a variety of different environments with varying amounts of ambient noise that can degrade the quality of voice sound information. One solution to this voice quality problem has been disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 6,094,492 to Dr. Peter V. Boesen, M.D. herein incorporated by reference in its entirety. To improve upon voice quality, both a bone conduction sensor and an air conduction sensor are used. Processing can occur on the bone conduction sensor sensed signal and the air conduction sensor sensed signal in order to better determine the voice sound information and in order to block out ambient noise or other extraneous information that might be undesirable. Sound processing can be used to improve the signal quality. The complexity and size of the processor used may be related to the complexity of the processing applied to the signals.

For example, additional processing can involve voice recognition. Although some voice recognition may be included on a sound processor located within the ear, locating the sound processor within the ear will increase the size of the device, the complexity, and the cost.

Furthermore, the use of voice recognition is especially desirable when a voice communication system, such as a cellular telephone, is merged with a PDA or a PDA functionality such as in a smart phone, or a PDA with a phone

attachment, or other structurally or functionally similar devices.

Thus there are a number of needs not currently being addressed related to hands free voice communication and personal digital assistance and cellular telephones.

Therefore it is a primary object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide an apparatus which improves upon the state of the art.

It is another object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide a hands free voice communications apparatus.

It is a further object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide a hands free voice communications device capable of improved voice communications.

A further object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide an apparatus capable of voice recognition.

A further object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide an apparatus capable of reducing the size of an earpiece.

A further object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide an apparatus for personal hands free voice communications that reduces the complexity of a hands free earpiece.

A further object, feature or advantage of the present invention to provide a hands free voice communications apparatus that reduces the cost of a hands free earpiece.

These and other objects, features or advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the specification and claims.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is an apparatus that provides for improved sound processing of a voice communications signal and a PDA while reducing the size of a hands free earpiece.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention is illustrated by way of example and not limitation and the figures of the accompanying drawings, and references indicate similar elements and in which:

Figure 1 is a diagram of a personal electronic device worn by a person according to the present invention.

Figure 2 is a representation of the earpiece of the present invention fitted on the ear.

Figure 3 is a diagram of the earpiece of the present invention fitted within an ear.

Figure 4 is a diagram of the personal electronic device of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention will now be described as it applies to an exemplary embodiment. It is not intended that the present invention be limited to the described embodiment. It is intended that the invention cover all modifications and alternatives which may be included within the spirit and scope of the invention.

Figure 1 shows the personal electronic system of the present invention as worn by a person. The personal communication system as shown has a display 4 such as a LCD panel or other data display module such as may be found in a cellular telephone or PDA. The device 2 may be worn on a belt 6 as shown or be placed in a pocket or may be otherwise

carried by a person. A part of the system includes the earpiece 10 worn by the person.

Figure 2 shows a pictorial representation of the earpiece 10 as worn in a person's ear. The earpiece has an external ear canal portion 12 that is fitted within the ear. The earpiece 10 has an ear attachment portion 14 fitted around the ear. The earpiece 10 in its preferred form houses a transceiver 18.

Figure 3 discloses an example of the earpiece 10 of the present invention as worn in the ear. The earpiece 10 is designed to be worn at the ear. An external canal portion 34 of the earpiece includes a bone conduction sensor 24 and an air conduction sensor 30 located on a resilient member 36. In this manner, the bone conduction sensor 24 and the air conduction sensor 30 are located within the external auditory canal 34. As shown, a portion of the earpiece is adapted to be fitted to the contours of a posterior superior wall of the external auditory canal. The bone conduction sensor is adapted to operatively contact a portion of the external auditory canal adjacent the mastoid bone to convert bone vibrations of voice sound information into electrical signals. The air conduction sensor 30 provides for air vibrations within the external auditory canal 34 to be received and to also be converted into electrical signals. An antenna 32 of the earpiece 10 is also shown. The present invention contemplates that the placement of the antenna as well as other portions of the earpiece device may vary.

Figure 4 provides a diagram of the system of the present invention. The system includes the PDA portion 2 as well as the earpiece portion 10. An earpiece portion 10, the air conduction sensor 30 and the bone conduction sensor 24 are in operative connection with a transceiver 52. Although a single stereo transceiver is shown, the present invention

also contemplates that multiple transceivers could be used to transmit the air conduction signal and the bone conduction signal on separate channels. The present invention also contemplates that the air conduction sensor and the bone conduction sensor signals can be combined in any number of ways so that they may be transmitted from a single transceiver and then received and separated. In addition, an optional speaker 54 is shown. The present invention further contemplates that the speaker need not be located within the earpiece.

The PDA portion 2 includes both a PDA 28 and a cellular transceiver 44. It should be apparent that the present invention contemplates any number of PDA/cellular or satellite telephone combinations. This includes both smart phones as well as PDA's with wireless voice communication attachments. The present invention contemplates any number of other wireless voice devices with PDA functionality. PDA functionality includes functions such as an organizer, an address book, a note pad, a calendar, and any other number of functionalities. For example, a PDA may function running under the Windows CE operating system, the EPOC operating system, the PALM operating system, the Symbion operating system, but is in no way limited to a particular type of operating system run by the PDA and/or the cellular telephone. Similarly, the present invention can include any number of processors capable of performing the functions described. For example, an ARMs processor may be used. The short-range transceiver 46 is in communication with the earpiece transceiver 32. In this manner, wireless information including a signal from the air conduction sensor and a signal from the bone conduction sensor can be transmitted from the earpiece to the PDA portion of the device.

Further, once the PDA portion of the device receives this information, the PDA 28 may apply any number of sound processing algorithms to the received information. For example, where both an air conduction signal and a bone conduction signal are received by the PDA, the PDA may simply mix the two signals, the PDA may mix the two signals in varying proportions dependent upon the type of voice sound information desired. Similarly, the PDA may apply filters to one of the signals derived from the other signal and numerous other digital signal processing algorithms and methods such as may be appropriate for a particular desired result. It should be apparent that the PDA 28 may have more processing power than a small processor located within the earpiece would.

The system of the present invention includes a number of advantages. It provides for the ability to process information received from both an air conduction sensor and a bone conduction sensor at a PDA. This information may be processed to support voice recognition and/or voice activation. In addition, this reduces the need for processing within the earpiece itself, thereby reducing the cost and the size of the earpiece while increasing the processing capabilities available to process the sensed sound information. In addition, due to the improved processing ability, hands free voice communications are improved over that which would be possible by merely using a PDA or an earpiece associated with a PDA.

Therefore an improved system for hands free voice communication for use with a PDA and wireless voice communication device has been disclosed. The present invention includes numerous variations on the types of sensors used, the type of PDA and the type of cellular transceiver used, the type of short range transceiver used,

